



Staff Report

STATUS REPORT ON “TRANSFORMING EL CAMINO REAL/GRAND BOULEVARD” PROJECT

Honorable Chair and Board Members:

Summary/Background

In June 2006, City staff had completed its fourth study session to review the Project Area Plan for the San Mateo County “Transforming El Camino Real” project. This project focuses on the multi-city planning effort for potential improvements to Caltrain station areas and adjoining streets and intersections within Belmont, San Carlos, and Redwood City.

The study sessions focused on the review of context maps, plan area conditions, and potential design approaches for streetscape improvements to the adjoining Caltrain streets. The study area is approximately 3,000 feet in length – from the 500 Block of El Camino Real (U-Haul building) to the north to Harbor Boulevard to the south. The Planning Commission and the Redevelopment Agency had each conducted two of the above-described study sessions.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) & SamTrans is administering a grant from the Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) Program for the project. The project serves to build upon the recommendations made as part of the 2003 Peninsula Corridor Plan that was prepared by Project for Public Spaces, Inc., and facilitate the planning/design efforts around such improvements to the CalTrain Station/surrounding areas.

Major objectives of the project include:

- Promoting a smart growth corridor, linking transportation with economic development
- Improving pedestrian access to Cal Train station areas
- Expand non-auto circulation opportunities throughout the corridor
- Enhancing the visual quality and image of the corridor

Goals for Belmont from the Peninsula Corridor Plan are as follows:

- The train station should be a community public space on both sides (El Camino Real and

Old County Rd)

- Crossings should be improved along El Camino Real
- Green buffer or edge on east side of El Camino along frontage parking area should be created
- Widen/upgrade/repair sidewalks on both sides of El Camino Real
- Lanes at El Camino Real should be narrowed to allow for wider sidewalks and to create pedestrian refuges at medians in the street
- Bus stops and shelters should generally be improved

Discussion

Planning Commission/RDA Summary of Recommendations – Study Session Review

From the four conducted study sessions by the Planning Commission and RDA, the following was recommended for further study:

- Consider bike lane improvements/enhancements as part of any aggregate lane width reductions in concert with bulb-out improvements, widened sidewalk areas, expanded/improved areas for pedestrian crossings, and enhanced landscaping areas.
- An additional El Camino Real pedestrian crossing area should be considered between O'Neill Avenue and Broadway Street.
- Delineate species for proposed tree installation.

Furthermore, the Planning Commission and RDA identified their recommended top three project study areas/components for implementation as follows:

- The pedestrian crossing improvements (refuge areas, widened crosswalks and associated bulb-outs) for the El Camino Real & Ralston Avenue intersection.
- The proposed improvements along the west side of El Camino Real from O'Neill Avenue (north) to Harbor Boulevard (south).
- The proposed improvements along the west side of El Camino Real from Ralston Avenue (south) to Middle Road (north).

Further work efforts to pursue completion of a final plan (for review/recommendation by the Planning Commission and adoption by the RDA) were temporarily suspended to allow staff to shift priorities and focus on Economic Development Strategy Target Site & General Plan Update tasks. Staff also solicited grant opportunities in mid-2006 for funding of the three above-described project study areas (which were unsuccessful). New opportunities for grant funding (via MTC/ABAG & CCAG) to assist in the planning/implementation of the priority component areas/design concepts envisioned as part of this project have recently become available, and staff will be submitting applications within the next 45-60 days for these grants.

A final Commission meeting will be scheduled to “fine-tune” the draft recommendations for area plan improvements and forwarded to the Redevelopment Agency for final approval (expected in Fall 2008).

Formulation of Grand Boulevard Initiative (GBI)

Since mid-2006, Community Development Department staff (i.e. Com/Dev Director) has served as the City’s representative to the Grand Boulevard Initiative Task Force. This Task Force has focused on (but has not been limited to) the development of an existing conditions report, adoption of a Vision/Challenge Statement & *Guiding Principles*, securing funding for Grand Boulevard projects, and the completion of a Multimodal Transportation Plan – the full scope of the GBI Work Program is provided as Attachment A. The above-described Guiding Principles have been drafted and staff will be presenting a Resolution to the RDA/City Council for review & adoption later this year (expected in Spring 2008).

Development of Context Sensitive Design Practice & Guidelines – El Camino Real

City staff also serves on land use & design review committees of the GBI that are focusing on preparation of a “Context Sensitive Design Practice & Guidelines” document that provides design and procedural guidance on developing projects within the corridor, consistent with Caltrans requirements. It is assumed these guidelines will be the basis for the granting of “design exceptions” by Caltrans for approving and implementing context sensitive improvement street projects on El Camino Real. A draft Work Plan (12/13/07), Deliverables, and Tentative Schedule for this component of the GBI work program is provided as Attachment B.

General Plan/Vision Statement

Review of this matter is consistent with the General Plan and Vision Statement.

Fiscal Impact

None at this time.

Public Contact

This matter was placed on the agenda and posted as required by the California Government Code.

Recommendation

There is no specific recommendation associated with this status report/update item. Staff will continue to pursue completion of required tasks for Transforming El Camino Real Priority Calendar project. As discussed above, a final plan with fine-tuned specific elements for the study area will be presented for Agency review and approval in Fall 2008.

Alternative

1. Direct staff to prepare an alternative course of action.

Attachments

- A. Grand Boulevard Initiative Work Program
- B. Context Sensitive Design Practice & Guidelines Draft Work Plan

Respectfully submitted,

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PLEASE NOTE: Attachments A & B are not included as part of this document. Please contact the Community Development Department at (650) 595-7417 for more information on viewing these attachments.